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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KISL](#) [XF](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: QURAN ALLEGATION FOLLOW-UP - THE U.S. RESPECTS ISLAM & HOLY QURAN

REF: A. KUWAIT 02092

[1](#)B. STATE 90992

[1](#)C. STATE 88240

[1](#)1. Summary: While there has been coverage on the Quran allegations from Newsweek, Post has received little feedback from local contacts which would indicate widespread anger over the story (ref. A). Criticism from the media has generally come from anti-American sources. PAS issued a press release from the Ambassador on May 17, 2005, stressing that the Newsweek allegation is false and that the U.S. respects Islam and the Holy Quran. End summary.

"An insult to the Holy Book"

[1](#)2. Al-Qabas, on May 15, 2005, p. 2, published an article under the headline, "Condemnation for the Desecrating of Al-Quran: It is the undermining of one and a half billion Muslims." The paper wrote: "The International Charitable Muslim Society strongly condemns, and expresses its deep concern regarding the acts of desecrating the Holy Quran by investigators in the Guantanamo detention camp. This is an appalling behavior and represents an insult on the holy book that more than one and a half billion Muslims believe in." A group of Shiites clerics and scholars in Kuwait also condemned the act and clarified, "We understand that this act was committed by an ignorant individual who hates Muslims and is full of hate for personal reasons; however, his behavior should not go unpunished."

"An apology alone is not acceptable"

[1](#)3. Al-Rai Al-Aam, on May 15, 2005, p. 20 republished a press release by the Islamic Constitutional Movement-Kuwait's version of the Muslim Brotherhood-on the alleged desecration of the Holy Quran. The headline read, "Al-Dustouriya-The Constitutional on the desecration of the Holy Quran: An apology and severe punishment are required." The press release by the Movement said, "The Islamic Constitutional Movement denounces with great anger and seriously condemns the desecration acts that have been committed by US instruments at the Guantanamo detention centre. An apology alone is not acceptable unless it was accompanied by severe punishment for these acts as well as for the inhumane treatment of Muslims in Guantanamo and other places like Abu Ghraib." The paper also reported a statement by the Shi'a Clerics in Kuwait, which condemned the acts of desecrating the holy Quran as described above.

"It reminds us of the crimes of the Crusaders"

[1](#)4. In the editorial/opinion Section of Al-Watan on May 18, 2005, conservative columnist Dr. Ajeel Al-Nashmi wrote that "desecrating the Quran is nothing new." "It is not strange to learn that they desecrate the Quran and insult one and a half billion Muslims around the world. We recall the atrocities against the Quran that were committed in Spain when the Spanish entered Qurtoba. It also reminds us of the crimes of the Crusaders in Jerusalem. In one day they killed 70,000 Muslims and desecrated the Holy Book. The US today is a copy of that dark history. We live in a world that is governed by the law of the jungle. This is not strange when we know that Jews run the politics and influence the public opinion behind the scenes."

[1](#)5. Anti-American Salafi-leaning columnist Muhammed Yusuf Al-Mulaifi, who is not considered by PAS nor by our Kuwaiti contacts to have a serious influence in Kuwait, in Al-Seyassah published an article on May 18, 2005 on page 15 on the Quran allegation. The headline was, "Unquestionable Proof that Americans desecrated the Quran." Mr. Al-Mulaifi wrote, "when Newsweek magazine learned that its report on desecrating the Quran in Guantanamo caused severe damage to the image of the US Administration, it quickly retracted the report and had doubts about its authenticity under pressure from the Pentagon. What if the Muslim world did

not react to this unacceptable insult as it did? Would the magazine have retracted its story and corrected its alleged mistake? And what about the reports from British Muslims who were released from Guantanamo? The first thing they said was that US soldiers insulted them and the Holy Quran."

16. Al-Anba on May 18, 2003, on p. 3, quoted the Speaker of the National Assembly, Jassem Al-Khorafi as saying, "if the magazine retracted its story, we call upon the US Administration to investigate this incident, which can be regarded as a big crime against more than one billion Muslims around the world. We also urge the US government to punish anyone who is found guilty of committing this crime." The same day's Al-Watan, on p. 50, also carried the same quote.

Post's press response: U.S. Respects Islam and the Quran

17. Though Post received few comments on the allegation and PAS received no press inquiries on the issue, PAS issued two general press releases, in Arabic and in English. The first press release on May 14, 2005, featured Secretary Rice's statement of May 12, 2005 before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs.

18. On May 17, 2005, PAS issued a press release from the Ambassador. The text of the statement follows:

Newsweek has retracted its report of May 9 alleging disrespect of the Holy Quran at Guantanamo Bay. This story is false. The Department of Defense has been looking into allegations of desecration and has found nothing to substantiate them. The U.S. government will investigate all credible allegations of misconduct and will take appropriate action should misconduct occur.

Detainees at Guantanamo receive (a) adequate shelter and clothing, (b) three culturally-appropriate meals per day, (c) an opportunity to worship (including copies of the Quran and prayer beads), (d) the means to send and receive mail, (e) reading materials, and (f) exceptional medical care. Additionally, the call to prayer is played over camp loudspeakers at the appropriate times every day and detainee cells have stenciled arrows pointing the direction to Mecca.

I would like to reiterate to Muslims in Kuwait and throughout the world, disrespect for the Holy Quran is not now, nor has it ever been, nor will it ever be, tolerated by the United States. We honor the sacred books of the world's great religions. Disrespect for the Holy Quran is abhorrent to us all. The U.S. deeply respects Islam and the Holy Quran.

19. Most of the daily newspapers published the Ambassador's statement in full or in part on May 18, 2005, which happened to fall on the same day that the two anti-American columnists published their articles (described above). Selections from the papers follow:

-Al-Qabas (Arabic, circ. 65,000) published a passage from the press release on the front page. The headline read, "US Ambassador: the U.S. has not, and will not tolerate any disrespect to the Holy Quran".

-Al-Rai Al-Aam (Arabic, circ. 70,000) printed the press release on page 36 as part of their report on the visit of Foreign Minister Shaykh Muhammad Al-Sabah to the U.S.

-The Arab Times published the full text of the press release on the front page in large red bold font. The headline read, "U.S. Respects Islam". More details on the retraction of the Newsweek story, and the Pentagon's reaction appeared on p. 8.

-The Kuwait Times (English, circ. 35,000) published the full text of the press release on page 2. The headline read, "U.S. Respects Islam, Quran: LeBaron".

Comment

110. Although today's columns were quite critical of the U.S. regarding the Newsweek report, they were written by generally anti-American columnists. The Quran issue has received moderate attention but was overshadowed by the National Assembly vote of May 16 which granted full political rights to Kuwaiti women. End comment.

LEBARON